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DEDICATION OF THE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION.¹

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WHEN the dedication of the buildings of the School of Education was planned and I was invited to make some utterance, I declined, deeming the honor thus tendered to me one for which I was hardly fitted.

It has occurred to me, however, that there is one word I should like to say about myself, on this occasion, which perhaps no one else could say. And thus it comes about that I thrust myself into the place where I am permitted to stand. This has its merit, however, in being more truly illustrative of my connection with the School than otherwise it would be.

What I should like to say is for the sake of clearness and correct understanding of fact, in the summing up of the schools that have been for the school that may be—that in the giving of these first buildings of the School of Education to their work of usefulness every stone may be in its own place and no other.

The term “founder of the school” has been used in my hearing as describing my connection with some phases of the School’s history. I should like to correct that, if I might be permitted. I did not found it—I simply found it; and those who find this School ever in some measure belong to it.

The founders, I take it, were the men who set in motion the educational forces which here meet to flow in one mighty stream: Francis W. Parker, who saw the ideal, and out of his own soul set on foot the effort to realize it, with whatever means were at hand—his own unbounded faith in the end and his clear vision of it, though afar off, being his great reservoir of power whose depth was never reached; John Dewey, who, likewise seeking his ideal, started his stream of effort, which stream still winds on before us, so that we may happily not pass upon its entirety, but

¹ Address delivered at the dedication of Emmons Blaine Hall, School of Education, University of Chicago, May 14, 1904.

only predict its greatness; Henry H. Belfield, who for years has fought the fight for the practical training of youth, to the uplifting and strengthening of education in our whole city; and all the others whose initiating work is here represented.

Finder is the only claim that I can make to a status in this school. But by virtue of that—and to just the extent found—owner, possessor; and by necessity of that, worker—though among the workers who wrought to this result I was the least.

But on these claims I rest. I beg exemption from any status as donor, for I count it the least; and would not be ranked by the sous given, but by the wealth received.

Happily in this School one is not marked by figures—unless it has departed from the old way; and the dollars were the incidents, where they could be found but the accident, of the work.

Since the joy of creating it cannot be mine, I ask no better place than a Finder of this School, or rather of one of its fore-runners, the old Normal School, which still exists, through its transmigrations of soul, in the School of Education.

To be a finder with satisfaction one must be first a seeker; and a little searching for relative values and proportions in this confused civilization of ours makes a good preparation for discovery.

And what was the thing one discovered in the scheme of the old Normal School? Was it a method of teaching? A system of instruction? Not to me, primarily. It was a scheme of life. It was the human picture—so confused about us, so distorted—beginning to take shape, beginning to find its proportions and values, beginning to resolve itself into harmony.

As an artist, in forecasting his work, sketches in his mind or on his canvas the anatomy of his thought, giving each element its true proportion, so we must do in our plan of education; else the picture of life we are trying to draw from each individual, like the painted one, would be a jumbled mass.

And as in the one case, this work must be done in the beginning, so, in the other, it is the foundation work that must be so laid; else the whole will be but a patchwork. And if important and recognized in every work we know, how much more impor-

tant in that subtle, delicate, and vital work — the construction of a conception of life in the growing mind — is the settling of values and proportions?

And in this process the first step is the selection of the central theme, the decision as to the next in importance, and so on to the last detail of finish. But without the anatomy all loses worth; and the last detail ranks with the fundamental drawing.

It was this work — it always seemed to me reconstructive indeed — that Colonel Parker had so well under way. He had chosen his central theme for the work of his human pictures — and it was character.

And therein lay his greatness — in his unerring vision of this as the prime principle of education; and then in his unswerving sureness in holding to it among all the claims and counter-demands of an age that does not recognize this principle in education, and amid all the perplexities of overlaid custom built up with prejudice. He struck through all to the root, and held all to the bar of his prime demand; and what did not hold there was left aside, while from the foundation was being built, bit by bit, the harmonious whole, consonant with this central essential principle.

Some of the world criticised that work as caring nothing for learning. One who knows cannot but feel that they were the unseeing ones. One might as well say that because Michael Angelo's lifetime did not suffice to complete all his work fully, and he left us those great figures still in part unchiseled, he cared naught for finish. One might as well, while gazing at their great symmetry and proportion, refuse to see the intention, and, not even observing the Moses, denounce all as crude.

This is the spirit of carping criticism which, in applying a foot-rule to measure great works, loses sense of the whole, and, in omitting the *would-be* from the *is*, cuts the ideal out of the actual and loses the essence of some of life's best gifts to humanity.

It was not that Colonel Parker loved learning less, but character more. Every brain that worked for the children would have had the training of a logician, the stores of the savant, if he could

have willed it so. He longed for these himself and only for that purpose—that he might give them. Every hand that taught would have been the hand of an expert.

But no savant, no expert, by virtue of that claim, could with his consent injure the soul of a child. He with the tongues of men and angels, he with the informations of the encyclopædias, would each have had to stand and deliver his claim to the right to mold the nature of the child with his tools, however wondrous they might be.

It was not that he undervalued the finest instrument, but that the mind should wield the instrument, not the instrument the mind. It was not that he underrated a complete equipment, but that he who possessed such must still show what he would do with it to that little child. And all who know, know how, when that was shown and seen, he longed for the full measure of learning to complete the whole; and to find such teachers, and so to train them, was his life's ideal.

In a choice clear and simple—shall it be character or shall it be learning that we give a child?—no one would hesitate. So much the Christian light that has penetrated has done for us.

But while we utter the choice, and feel safe in the words of it, the subtle and deadly temptations that assail the life of education come in a thousand forms; deadly, because, while we describe character in terms of action, these strike at the root of all, being selfish; subtle, because hidden in many difficulties.

The edifice of attainment being once constructed, and the perpetual question from the first being not, "What can you do with what you possess?" but, "How much more have you gained than your neighbor?"—ambition takes hold; and to ambition is added arrogance, when the top is reached. Then the last state is worse than the first; and some saving grace must come in to undo all.

Then comes the problem unmet as a rule. Is the educational institution to take note of the individual as a human being or only as a machine? Can it be that the affirmative answer is to be given to the latter, when the enormous weight of the influence of

the schools on the individual from the first to the last in time and value is considered?

These are the questions that are at stake for the world in our education; and these are the thoughts that make one rejoice that the elements that have produced the School of Education have joined hands with the University of Chicago. And though the School must lose its valued Director, it still has the upholding strength of the President of the University and of the University, to enable it to help to demonstrate the possibilities from the kindergarten through the academic life, and to filter out strength into the nation.

These visions make us glad that the truths sought in these schools may be still sought and found in the University, where the search may ascend into the clear light of learning, in the spirit that is free of selfishness and pride; where learning may be seen to be but new outposts into the vast unknown; and where, when we earthbound creatures dig a little deeper or pierce a little higher, it will not be in the spirit of a race to get ahead, but in the comradeship of an advancing army.

And so shall be found the force making for righteousness, for freedom, for community brotherhood, which our country and the world have need of.

In conclusion, I would say one word for Emmons Blaine.

The President and the University of Chicago have graciously proposed to honor my connection with the School of Education by naming one of its buildings for him.

In that fact I find great honor; and for him and for myself I wish to thank the University and its President. This University just came within his earthly ken, and his mind seized upon its great possibilities at once with all the interest and eagerness of his nature; and it would have been one of his deepest satisfactions to do for it in his own great way. I thank the University that his name may rest upon a place that is the home of so much that he would love.